



How to Get Missionary Literature Read.

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MISSIONARY reading means missionary succeeding. Turn the man's mind to Paton's life, and you turn the man's life to Paton's work. Every bright missionary book has sequels—as many of them as it has readers. They should never print "the end" on the last page of such a book; it is always "to be continued." Get readers to open these books, and they will open their pocket-books.

The problem of missions, at the bottom, is this: How to create a love of missionary reading. You may lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. What you want me to do is to name a few ways of making him thirsty. I will describe as many as my ten minutes will hold.

In the first place, your Missionary Committee, or whoever are pushing the matter, must read the missionary books themselves;

otherwise they will be in the position of a baldheaded man selling hair restorer.

In the second place, interesting bits of these books must be read to the young people, as you would hold out wisps of hay to a pony in order to toll him to pasture. To this end hold a "one-book" meeting, and go through some glorious missionary volume, one person to a chapter. Of course each speaker will give only the nuggets from his section of the book.

Sometimes you will meet a galaxy of volumes in the same way, getting half a dozen persons to peruse as many books, and allowing each of them ten minutes to give just the very best things in his book. This would be turning your meeting place into the right kind of sample room.

It would be well to make it a rule that every missionary meeting should contain a "book summary," a brisk review of some fresh missionary book. Occasionally, too, these reviews might be introduced into the ordinary prayer meetings. Why not?

Serials have built up the circulation of many a periodical. Enlist the serial interest for missions by selecting some thrilling missionary event, such as the Gardiner tragedy in Patagonia, and have it read to the young people up to the most exciting point,

when the reading will be stopped short with a "to be continued." Of course it is to be continued by their individual reading.

I would have a bold placard constantly staring young people in the face in their meeting room, bearing on it the words, "Have you read 'The Cobra's Den?'" or whatever book it is desired to push at the time.

I would set before the Society, in much the same way, a list that I would call the "at least" list—the best ten missionary books, say, and every Christian should read "at least" those ten. This essential minimum might consist of the lives of Carey, Judson, Livingstone, Martyn, Paton, Patteson, Gilmour, Hannington, Moffat, Eliot. The list would vary according to your library, but a goal is always an incentive. The Society might present, with a pleasant ceremony, an engrossed certificate to whoever completed this course of reading.

Has the good old fashion of "setting stints" gone by? Revive it in your missionary propaganda. Don't be afraid to ask for pledges. There's no better backbone than a promise. See how many will agree to read four mission books during the year—one a quarter. Have a record of this proud achievement kept by the Secretary, with occasional reports of progress. Get some one to

time himself while he reads a missionary book of average size, and report the result to the Society. You will discover that fifteen minutes a day would easily master six missionary biographies a year. The average American spends twice that time on his daily paper, sucking in poison.

Another good way to get missionary books read is to form jolly neighborhood reading circles. Who doesn't like to go to a party? Sweeten the road to Livingstone and Martyn with cake and lemonade. After the young folks reach the enchanted land the road thither will be forgotten. Don't "organize" these neighborhood reading circles; make them as simple as possible. The constitution of many an enterprise has "run down" through drawing on a constitution for it. Just put in each group some person of social magnetism, and you have all the constitution you need.

An admirable method, which was originated by the New York Endeavorers, is based on the good-natured principle of "making it unanimous." In brief, each Society buys a certain missionary book, with the understanding that it is to be read by every member of the Society. In order to "make it unanimous," some who would not otherwise read the book fall in love with the scheme. It were an interesting story, had I the time to tell how the various

districts of this great New York Endeavor Union have been brought by this simple principle first to buy for each Society a missionary library of four volumes read by every Endeavorer in every Society.

There has grown up also an exciting competition. To illustrate, in one Church, which contained three Christian Endeavor Societies, the Intermediate Society challenged the Juniors and Seniors to a race in obtaining readers for a certain delightful missionary book, each reader above the first hundred to count one. At the end of the time it was found that four hundred and thirty-eight persons had read the book, and the Juniors were the victors.

The missionary libraries, now to be obtained so cheaply, put missionary reading within the reach of all young people; but some such plan as I have detailed must be adopted, or the books will be bought but not read. Of course they should be kept in a case, accessible to all, and open every time the Society meets. In my own Society a member of the Missionary Committee always stands at this case, to record the books taken out and to lure into this missionary net the unsuspecting passer-by.

There may be a public library within the reach of the young

people. If so, make it a business to learn what missionary books are there, and to advertise them, announcing their numbers frequently and persistently. Give the librarian a rest from "Sir Flipperkin, the Dainty Duelist." Perform the same service for the Sunday school library, on whose dusty upper shelves you will probably find a few gems of missionary literature.

But the young people of the Church should not depend on the public library while they can easily get missionary books of their own. If money is in the way (or rather *isn't* in the way), you can persuade each person to buy a single book, which is to be his very own after all the Society have read it. Or, still better, let the Society purchase the books and then charge five cents for each reading, with one cent fines for each day the book is kept beyond two weeks. Thus the library will insensibly, and yet very sensibly, earn itself.

We must not forget, however, that all the freshest missionary literature appears in the missionary magazines, and much of the most valuable material never attains the *toga virilis* of a cloth cover. The young people in so many localities have done good work as subscription agents for these magazines among themselves and their families. I recommend that a table be placed in the

meeting room, and that it always contain sample copies of a variety of missionary magazines, marked with the prices, while some one stands by to act as drummer for the King's business.

A good way to arouse interest in this matter is to appoint one young Christian to a missionary periodical. It is his duty to know everything in his chosen journal, and be ready to report from it on call. You might dub these the "reporters" of the *Missionary Herald*, *Assembly Herald*, and so on. (*For the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, "Go Forward."*) It will be especially fine if the Society can own files of such magazines, well bound and thoroughly indexed. They will make the best of fuel for missionary fires.

Finally, to end with what is least in bulk, but sometimes greatest in value, do not neglect the missionary clippings. Put them together in little scrapbooks, arranged according to subjects, illustrated by the pictures you will collect, brightened up by missionary stories and poems. Then circulate the scrapbooks as if they were ordinary books, and they will be read with extraordinary interest. The fragments may prove the best of the feast.

And now I have only hinted at a few methods of doing this great deed. For if it is noble in our Christian heroes to blazen

the way of the cross, it is also honorable in us to turn the eyes of the young toward their glory, and they in their turn may lead the advancing host. Upon us, whose hearts are aglow with the reflected splendor of missionary annals, has been laid the proud duty of transmitting to other lives the inspiration we have received, thus perpetuating the fame of God's servants and extending the glory of God. As Christ gives us wisdom and strength, we will be true to our sacred trust.

Board of Missions of the M. E. Church, South, Nashville, Tenn.

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